

January 24, 2025

The Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for House Bill 157 – Education – Safe Schools Fund – Grant Allocations

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 157 (HB0157), titled "Education – Safe Schools Fund – Grant Allocations." This legislation seeks to authorize the reallocation of grants from the Safe Schools Fund to local school systems that have fully expended their grant allocation and demonstrate unmet need within the same fiscal year.

For many Latino and immigrant families, school safety represents a cornerstone of educational equity. However, underfunded schools often face significant challenges in addressing safety concerns, leaving students vulnerable. By allowing for the reallocation of funds, HB0157 ensures that resources are directed to schools with the greatest need, empowering educators and administrators to create safe and supportive learning environments for all students.

This adjustment acknowledges the urgency of addressing safety disparities across Maryland's schools and demonstrates the state's commitment to ensuring equitable access to necessary resources. Many Latino students attend under-resourced schools that face disproportionate safety challenges. HB0157 offers a practical and impactful solution by ensuring that funding aligns with the actual needs of each school system.

Maryland Latinos Unidos views this bill as a critical step toward fostering a more equitable education system. By supporting HB0157, the state can enhance the well-being of students, educators, and families alike, while addressing long-standing funding gaps.

We respectfully urge the members of the Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on HB0157. This legislation embodies the values of fairness and opportunity that are fundamental to our state's identity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,
Carlos Orbe, Jr.
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